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ASPECTS OF THE THEME OF KING AND GODDESS IN IRISH LITERATURE

BY

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A. The Significance and Origin of Mór Muman

The identification of the land of Ireland and its local divisions with their appropriate goddesses is a feature which has long been recognised. It was Ó Máille who first sought to explain the nuptial chaos apparent in some of the early Irish tales by demonstrating a connection between the goddess, represented as a historical figure, and the sovereignty of the territory with which she was associated[1]. Thus, Medb Cruachan and Medb Lethderg, really the same, were personifications of the sovereignty of Ireland, and to gain possession of Medb was to gain possession of the kingship, a fact which explained the unusual number of her husbands[2]. Thurneysen acknowledged himself in fundamental agreement with Ó Máille, but preferred a less allegorical interpretation, namely that Medb was a goddess and that the royal dignity was consecrated through marriage with her[3] : « Ó Máille sieht in Medb die Personifikazion der Herrschaft (« the Sovereignty of Ireland »). Ich möchte es weniger allegorisch fassen und eher vermuten, dass in einer früheren Zeit bei gewissen Stämmen die Königswürde durch eine

1. *ZCP*, XVII, 129 ff.
2. Cf. p. 14 n. 1 inf.
3. *ZCP*, XVIII, 108-10 ; cf. *ZCP*, XIX, 352.

mystiche Ehe mit der Göttin Medb angetreten, und geweiht wurde. » More recently, O'Rahilly discussed the same subject in an article on the names *Érainn* and *Ériu*[1]. He was naturally concerned most particularly with Ériu, who as « Earth-mother » was identified with the land of Ireland, but he referred to numerous other examples of the actual identification by name of goddess and locality : « The belief that Ériu (Éire) was a goddess has left an abiding impress on Irish literature and thought[2]. In *Baile in Scáil*[3] we find her depicted as a lady wearing a golden crown and seated on a crystal throne, having before her a vat of red liquor, from which she pours a draught into a golden cup which she hands to each successive king of Ireland. The text explains that the lady is *Flaith Érenn*, ' the Sovranty of Ireland ' ; but this allegorical interpretation is a later refinement and originally the lady of the libations was simply the divine mother Ériu conceived anthropomorphically. In early Irish belief each king of Tara (or Ireland) on attaining the kingship was espoused to the goddess Ériu, and the lesser kings were similarly espoused each to a local goddess... As we shall see later[4], Ériu was the solar goddess. The sun was regarded as a golden cup ; hence the goddess was conceived anthropomorphically as a lady possessing a golden cup[5]...

1. *Ériu*, XIV, 7 ff. Here he examined at some length the relationship of the goddess to the kingship and the significance of the feast of inauguration.

2. In the later period the tradition remained strong, as is shown by numerous references such as that in the Annals of Connacht and the Annals of Loch Cé which tells of the inauguration of Feidhlimidh Ó Conchobhair in the kingship of Connacht in 1310, *Et ar feis d'Fheidlimid mac Aeda meic Eogain re coiced Connacht*... O'Rahilly gives a list of such allusions from the later poetry, both syllabic and accented (*Ériu*, XIV, 18-21).

3. *ZCP*, III, 459 ; XIII, 373.

4. *Ériu*, XIV, 26..

5. Some may find difficulty in accepting this embellishment of his argument.

As the bride who at the inauguration-feast was supposed to hand to the chosen king of Ireland (or of Tara) a cup of mead, the goddess was known as *Medb*, 'she who intoxicates'[1].

In the present article I hope to point out several other representations of this pagan belief to be found in early Irish literature and, at the same time, to illustrate still further how vital and formative was its influence on that literature in the early centuries of its development. I also hope, not only to show that it persisted through the ages down to the present day as a well known feature of Irish literary composition, but to give some reasons for believing that it exercised an influence on recorded history as late as the eleventh century.

The first part of this discussion is concerned with a text which was edited in 1912 by T. P. O'Nolan under the title *Mór Muman ocus Aided Cuanach meic Ailchine*[2], but which for some reason or other has long lain neglected. The following is a summary of the tale, with the passage most relevant to our discussion given in full :

Mór Muman was the daughter of Aed Bennán. She was under enchantment *(admilliud)* at first. She used to go only as far as the door of a house. « Woe to thee, Mór », a voice would say from the air above. Moreover, the kings of Ireland were seeking her. One day she heard the voice saying, « Woe to thee, Mór ! » « I should prefer it to be given than constantly promised. » « Shall it be in the beginning or at the end ? » « In the beginning, indeed, » she said. Thereupon a great derangement *(fualang)* was put upon her and she bounded over the *liss*. It was not known where she went.

She wandered over Ireland for two years, clad in rags and blackened by sun and wind. Finally she came to Cashel, where Fíngen mac Aeda

1. Ó Máille also interpreted the word as having an active meaning, but Thurneysen regarded it as passive, « die Trunkene ».

2. *R. I. A. Proc.*, XXX C, p. 261. This title has evidently been supplied by the editor, for the text bears no such opening title in the manuscripts, although it ends with the description *Aided Cuanach meicc Ailchini insin.* I shall use the abbreviation M. M. for the title.

was king. She tended his sheep for three days, and then one day she went into the palace out of the pasture and threw herself down by the fire. Fingen wanted to put her out, but his wife (the daughter of the king of the Dési) said that he would have to sleep with Mór and offered him her brooch for doing so. Otherwise she would not sleep with him again. He finally consented. Then Mór left off her rags and went to his bed. Fingen asked her who she was, and then she told her name and her senses came to her. In the morning she arose to go to the sheep, but was retained by Fingen, who gave her the purple cloak of the queen and her brooch. He told the queen that Mór would stay in her place, because she was of better race. The text adds that every excellent woman in Ireland was compared to Mór Muman.

She remained with Fingen and bore him a son, named Sechnasach. Then Fingen died and she went to Cathal mac Finguine, king of Glendomain. For the kingship of Munster was centred in Cashel for one period (of three), in Glendomain for the second and in Áine for the third ; for these are all Eoganacht. So she went to Cathal in Glendomain.

Meanwhile, a sister of Mór, Ruithchern by name, had been stolen and brought from the west, and at that time was herding in captivity at Dún Chaireda in the country of Uí Liatháin. This was brought to Mór's knowledge through the acuteness of Mac Dá Cherda, so she went and brought her sister back with her. Subsequently the two of them used to be lamenting over the dead Fingen, until one day Cathal heard Mór mourning her former husband (this in verse)[1]. He pointed out to her that it was not proper to weep for one who was dead, and she then promised to forget her dead husband and love the living.

She then gave Ruithchern to Lonán mac Findnig, but when he set off westwards he was attacked by Cuanu mac Cailchín from Liathmuine and his wife taken from him, while he himself escaped wounded. After that war was proclaimed by the sons of Aed Bennán upon the sons of Cathal, because the couple did not arrive in the west under their protection ; and indeed, some of the sons of Cathal were at the outrage. How should the battle be fought, asked the Munstermen. If the sons of Cathal went against the sons of Aed, they would fall by each other through their equal pride. So, the sons of Aed went against the « echtar-tuatha » to the east, i. e. Osraige, the Déise, Éile, Múscraige Bregoin, Airther Femin and Fir Maige Féne, of which last Cuana was king. The sons of Cathal faced the

1. Cf. the lines (not in our text) quoted in AT, *RC*, XVII, 174 : *Fingen mac Aedha, ri Muman, mortuus est, de quo coniunx dixit,*

In Muma
re linn Fingen maic Aeda (*Bennan a Bregha* added in MS.)
robdar lan[*a*] *a cuiledha,*
robdar toirrtigh a treba

i. e. The land of Munster at the time of Fingen son of Aed, full were its storerooms, fruitful were its homesteads.

Corco Loígde, Corco Duibne, Ciarraige, Corco Bascind and Corco Mruad. In the ensuing battle the sons of Cathal conquered and carried the pursuit from Inde Mór to Luachair Dedad, while the sons of Aed routed before them and followed up eastwards to Cenn Currig. Lonán pursued Cuanu and they came to grips in Dubid (or « in a dark wood »). Cuanu wounded his enemy, but on turning away he stumbled and Lonán cut off his head.

The allegorical character of this text is very striking. Judged simply as a story it is confused and obscure, and it must be viewed rather as part of the whole pattern of old Irish religious beliefs and traditions with their accompanying political complications. Seen thus, the figure of Mór, her derangement, her frenzied wandering and her marriages to Fíngen and Cathal, all take on a deeper and richer significance.

In the first place the madness or frenzy which Mór undergoes does not stand isolated in Irish literature. The obvious comparison is, of course, with the story of Suibne Geilt. Our text says that Mór bounded over the wall of the *liss*, and for this we have an approximate parallel in the case of Suibne and of St. Moling[1]. This theme of the Suibne-Moling texts, together with the background of the word « geilt », already forms the subject of a most interesting study by James Carney[2]. He deals mainly with the Suibne group of tales and poems and argues the probability that the theme was borrowed from Strathclyde, but he acknowledges that there seems to have existed independently in Ireland « the conception of the wild or deranged forest-dweller[3]. » So he admits the possibility that the reference to leaping in our tale is an example of what may have been the germ of the levitation *motif* in the Suibne or later *geilt* stories. This alone

1. As with Mór Muman, so *geltacht* usually originates in the victim being addressed by a voice from heaven ; cf. *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, V, 131.
2. *Éigse*, VI, 83 ff.
3. *Loc. cit.*, p. 97, n. 38.

endows the tale of Mór Muman with some importance, but at the same time it would be an error to assume from its similarity to the Suibne *motif* that our tale is simply part of the theme of the « wild or deranged forest-dweller. »

I have already quoted the passage which mentions the death of Fíngen and Mór's marriage to Cathal. It is, to say the least of it, a rather strange passage if taken as a simple statement of fact. Fíngen mac Aeda, king of Cashel, dies. Mór then goes to Cathal mac Finguine, king of Glendomuin, and, as if to explain this, the text describes how the kingship of Munster came in a sort of cycle to Cashel, Glendomuin and Áine *(Condechaid-si co Cathal macc Finguine* .i. *co rrig Glendomain* .i. *rige Muman a Casiul in tres fecht; a Glennamain in fecht aile; a hAine in fecht aile* .i. *Eogonacht sin uile. Luid dano co Cathal in Glendomuin).* We can explain this passage satisfactorily only by assuming that it embodies an old tradition by which Mór was in some way representative of the kingship of Munster, and if that be so, then the implication is that the kingship of Munster passed from one to the other of these three branches of the Eoganacht, although the text does not actually describe it as reaching Áine.

In point of fact, the regnal lists show that Fíngen mac Aeda was followed in the kingship of Munster by Cathal mac Aeda[1], who, it can quite easily be demonstrated, has been replaced in the tale by Cathal mac Finguine : The latter was king of Cashel (in AI he is called *ri hErend*) and died in 742 (AI, AU). He was, in fact, third in descent from Cathal mac Aeda (Rawl. B. 502, 148b1 : *Cathal m. Finguine m. Con cen Máthir*[2] *m. Cathail m.*

1. Cf. LL, 320 a ; An Leabhar Muimhnech, ed. Ó Donnchadha, p. 402 (from BB) ; *ZCP*, IX, 479 (from Laud 610) ; *Senchas Fagbála Caisil*, ed. Dillon, *Ériu*, XVI, pp. 65, 70 n. 1. Cf. index to *AI*, ed. Mac Airt, p. 553.

2. The death of Cú cen Máthir, grand-father of Cathal m. Finguine, is recorded in *AU* at 665.

Aeda...) and various other associations confirm that his *floruit* was in the first half of the eighth century, but a curious doubling of names in two genealogical lines at an interval of little over a century caused a certain amount of confusion, resulting in Cathal mac Finguine being sometimes associated with historical figures of the early seventh century. Just as the later, or historical, Cathal was third in descent from Cathal mac Aeda (+AI 628, CS 625), with whom he has been confused, so Aed Bennán (+AI, AU 619), the father of Mór Muman in our tale, was great-grandfather of another Aed (+AI 734, AU 733), the son of Conaing. Moreover, both of these Aeds had sons named Mael Dúin, whose obits occur in AI at 661 and 786. With two such sets of names so closely related in time, place and circumstance confusion would not be unexpected. So AU records the death of *Mael Duin mac Aeda Bennain* in 786, and we find him called thus in FM at the years 752 and 781[1]. And so Cathal mac Finguine is introduced into the story of Mór Muman in place of Cathal mac Aeda, bringing about one of those chronological uncertainties, which later give rise to confusion and contradiction in story and poem. In AI s. a. 742, where the death of Cathal mac Finguine is recorded, a quatrain is quoted which is said to have been spoken of him by Mór Muman :

In tImblech
ro-sáer Ailbe dia bachail,
is óen ina erdarcus
a úr dar élan Cathail[2].

1. So also AC at 753 (recte 757) and AT at 757 ; An Leabhar Muimhneach, p. 403.

2. « In tImblech (Emly), which Ailbe has ennobled by his crozier one thing famous about it (or, it is alone in its fame), its earth covering Cathal's brow! » Cf. Bruchstücke, no. 145.

Presumably this had reference in the first place to Cathal mac Aeda[1] Flaind Cathrach, and we may compare it to the quatrain cited in AT (see p. 79, n. 1, sup.) and supposed to have been spoken of Fíngen mac Aeda Duib by his wife[2]. Incidentally, both these fragments, for such they almost certainly are, have the same metrical pattern, known as *Ae freslige bec*[3].

We have seen therefore that the statement of MM., namely that the kingship of Munster passed from Cashel to Glendomuin, is true of that particular time. It also mentions Áine as the third destination in the cycle, but does not represent Mór Muman as marrying into the Eoganacht Áine, and so in fact, this succession fails here as far as the records go, for the next person recognised as king of Cashel was Failbe Flann (+AU 637, AI 639) of the Eoganacht Caisil, who was followed by Cúán mac Amalgada of the Eoganacht Áine (+AI 641)[4]. If, however, we examine the succession of the Munster kingship, we find that from the opening of the seventh century to the middle of the eighth it was held exclusively by the eastern Eoganacht septs ; more precisely, allowing for a couple of doubtful instances, it alternated between

1. Although this does not preclude the possibility that some form of our kingship legend attached itself to Cathal mac Finguine, who appears to have been unusually ambitious and to have had aspirations reaching beyond the kingship of Munster.

2. It may be noted that the introduction of Cathal mac Finguine into an early seventh century ambience is not confined to the story of Mór Muman. In a little tale edited by Marstrander, *Ériu*, V, 114, he is made a contemporary of Fiachna mac Baetáin, Brandub mac Echach and Guaire mac Colmáin, while in *Aislinge meic Coinglinne* he is associated with Comdán and others of the early seventh century.

3. They also show *conachlann*. The conclusion is that they formed (part of) a poem included in a version of the story of MM.

4. In both these cases AI gives the obits without adding any indication of royal title. Cf. Ó Buachalla, *Contributions towards the Political History of Munster, 450-800 A. D.*, Journal of Cork Historical & Arch. Soc., LVII (1952), p. 74.

the Eoganacht Caisil and the Eoganacht Glennamnach, with two interventions from the Eoganacht Áine[1]. Thus, if we accept Mór as a representation of the goddess identified with Munster, MM gives a true reflection of the succession to the southern kingship in the period which it depicts[2].

It will be noticed that MM has no mention of the symbolic libation which O'Rahilly regards as one of the essential ingredients of the myth or legend of the territorial goddess. But even if that be so, there is of course no reason why all adaptations of the basic theme should preserve the same pattern down to points of detail. In the normal course of things they will differentiate themselves, one from another, by accentuating certain aspects of the general theme at the expense of others and by introducing extraneous or related material. Thus, as we have seen, MM presents one stage, whether original or secondary, of the *motif* of the person carried off in a frenzy. But this frenzy of Mór's and her subsequent return to sanity, together with her acceptance of the queen's cloak, are really a particular version of a component part of the story of the goddess and the king.

The idea of the goddess changing her form and her raiment when she is without her proper spouse and king, is very common in the whole of our literature, and enshrines the ancient belief that a land gained or lost fruitfulness and prosperity according as it gained or lost its true and rightful king. So, when Piaras Feiritéir employs it of Ireland in his poem, *Iomdha Iorradh ag Tulaigh Tuathail*[3],

1. The Cúán mentioned above and Eterscél mac Maíl Dúin (+AI 721) Cf. Ó Buachalla, *loc. cit.*, pp. 74-5.

2. MM probably reflects in other ways also the political background of Munster during the early centuries. For example, it shows clearly the sharp distinction between the eastern and western Eoganachta, and their attitude towards the non-Eoganacht septs as illustrated in the alignment of the forces in the battle.

3. Ed. Ua Duinnín (1934), p. 89.

he is merely following a well established precedent. One of its best known forms is that of the ugly old hag who, on union with the rightful aspirant to the kingship of Ireland, immediately becomes a beautiful woman and identifies herself as Éire, or the sovereignty of Éire. Perhaps it is best known as told of Niall Noíglallach, who meets the hag when hunting with his brothers. After each of the others has gone off looking for water, has met the hideous guardian of the well and refused to kiss her in return for water, Niall goes in his turn and without hesitation gives her a kiss, whereupon she becomes transformed into a beautiful lady and identifies herself as *in Flaithius*[1]. We also find a similar account in connection with Lugaid Laígde[2] and his brothers[3], but here there is one noteworthy difference, in that the idea of physical intercourse is further emphasized and the symbolic libation largely subordinated to it[4].

These appear to have been the two main elements of the *banais* or marriage-ceremony, and, when one or both of them were included in the relevant context, they signified the completion and consummation of the ceremony. We have found the integral pattern in the tales of Niall and Lugaid Laígde, which include both elements, while not attributing the same degree of

1. In a poem attribubed to Cúán ua Lothcháin (+1024), ed. Joynt, *Ériu*, IV, 91. There is also a prose version, ed. Stokes, *RC*, XXIV, 190 ff. ; O'Grady, S. Gad. I, 326 ff.

2. In the common Irish tradition it is Lugaid mac Con who gains the High-Kingship, cf. Gwynn, *Met. D.*, IV, 411 ; O'Rahilly, *Ériu*, XIV, 17.

3. *Met. D.*, IV, 136 ff. There is also a prose version in *Cóir Anmann*, § 70.

4. It is completely absent in the *Met. D.*, but in the *Coir Anmann* version the transformed female provides for Lugaid and his brothers « the freshest of food and the oldest of ale, and self-moving drinking horns pouring out to them. »

importance to them[1]. They are also present in the tradition of Medb, where the libation-element is implied by her name, and the other element is amply demonstrated by the tales in which she plays a part. In *Baile in Scáil*, however, the libation alone is mentioned, and the obvious rejoinder that the context would scarcely allow otherwise does not take away from the fact that only one element is present. The elimination of one or other element is all the easier because the one word, *fess (feis)*, « sleeping, feast » covered both in early Irish[2]. When the *banais (banfheiss)* was to be described, special emphasis could be laid either on the festive or on the physical aspect of the ceremony without in the least straining the meaning of the word. As it so happens, the physical aspect, being less ambiguous, becomes rather more prominent and even where it is not explicitly mentioned it is often clearly uppermost in the minds of storyteller and poet.

One text tells us that when Cormac ua Cuinn had a dream that his wife slept with Eochu Gunnat and then returned to him *(Atchí dno a banc[h]ēile fēin .i. Eithni Thoebfoda du fheis la hEochu ṅGunnat 7 a bith ón n-ētrud co a chēile aigi 7 a tuidecht chuci fēin ar sin)*, his druids interpreted it to mean that his kingship would sleep with Eochu, but that the latter would be only one year in the kingship of Tara *(Do bhanchēile immorra do fheis leis ised dofōirne do ríghe faifes leis 7 nī bia acht oen- bliadain i*

1. Perhaps I may refer here to a very interesting article (R. A. Breatnach, *The Lady and the King, a theme of Irish Literature*, Studies, XLII, 321 ff.) which I have read since writing this article and which treats of the development of the theme underlying these tales.

2. It has been suggested by Vendryes, followed by Loth, that the two different meanings represent originally different words (*RC*, XXXV, 89-90 ; XXXVIII, 297 ; cf. R. I. A. Dict. s. v. 2 *feis*), but this does not, of course, take away from their practical identity in O. I.

flaithius Temra)[1]. This clear and deliberate exposition of the old belief becomes all the more interesting in view of the fact that Eithne occurs in another tale, *Esnada Tige Buchet*, which is based upon a very similar theme. This represents Eithne Thoebfhota, the daughter of Cathaer Mór, king of Ireland (sometimes daughter of Dúnlang mac Énna Niad[2]), as the foster-child of Buchet the hospitaller. The latter, after his wealth has gradually been eaten up by the persistent demands of Cathaer's numerous sons, is finally forced to flee from Leinster and makes his way to Cenannas in Meath. There he and his wife and foster-child live in poverty and obscurity until one day, when Eithne is occupied with the lowly tasks of milking, drawing water and cutting rushes, Cormac ua Cuinn happens to pass that way and sees her. He falls in love with her and seeks her from Buchet ; and when the latter refuses, Cormac takes her by force. She stays with him only one night, however, and then escapes, but during that night Coirpre Lifechair is conceived *(ní fói leis acht in n-aidchi sin 7 atrullai úad. Ocus issin n-aidchi sin dorala ina broinn in Corpri Liphechair mac Cormaic).* Afterwards Eithne returns to Cormac as his queen, and the latter bestowes great wealth on Buchet as his foster-child's bride-piece[3].

1. *Éigse*, II, 192. In his dream Cormac also sees Lugaid mac Lugna striking the head from Eochu Gunnat's wife (Cacht, daughter of Fergus), and, according to the druids, this signifies that the Ulstermen and their king will fall by Cormac and the Connachtmen, who will win the battle for him. Here the wife of the king of Ulster is identified with *Ulaid*, i. e. the province of Ulster or the Ulstermen together with their king.

2. In *Echtra Cormaic*, I. T. III, I, 194 ; likewise in Keating, who calls her Eithne Ollamhdha (*F. F.* II, 300). In Gilla Mo-Dutu's *Banshenchas* she is Ethni Ollamda, daughter *(cland)* of Cathaer (LL, 138 b 49 ; *RC*, XLVII, 301), while the prose version in Lec. avoids the disagreement of its source by making both Eithnes wives of Cormac (*RC*, XLVIII, 177).

3. Ed. Stokes, *RC*, XXV, 18 ff. ; later metrical version ed. Mary Hayden, *ZCP*, VIII, 261 ff. The origins of the tale are discussed at length by Professor O'Rahilly in *Ériu*, XVI, 7 ff.

This story perhaps demonstrates one of the reasons, if such be necessary, why the coition becomes the dominant element in our pattern as represented in the literature. The underlying tradition envisages the goddess espoused to the rightful king, but it also regards her as the mother of such a king and the ancestress of a royal line[1]. Usually one or other of these aspects is adopted for special emphasis, as the two tales told of Eithne[2] illustrate to some extent, and where the latter aspect was in mind it is easy to appreciate how the idea of coition was kept in the foreground and tended to become the outstanding and characteristic element of the pattern. This point will be clearer perhaps when I come to discuss other examples.

To return to MM, this text represents the euhemerized goddess as changing her appearance and also as recovering from a mental derangement once she weds her rightful spouse. Furthermore, it provides one of those adaptations of the underlying myth which emphasize the coition as the centre and essence of the allegory. It is that which recalls Mór to her senses, and makes her remember and declare who she is, as her counterpart does in the stories of Niall and Lugaid. Therefore, it is clear that whatever differences exist between the tale of Mór Muman and other better known adaptations of the myth can be easily explained, while the basic similarities remain very striking. If we take Medb as being the outstanding figure of the territorial goddess in Irish literature, we immediately recall that tradition regarded her as a paragon of womanhood — except where the euhemeristic and rationalistic

1. Cf. *Mel. D.*, IV, 142, l. 133-4, where the lady says to Lugaid Laígde, « I will tell thee thy son's name... Lugaid shall his name be and Mac Con thereto » ; *RC*, XXIV, 200, where she tells Niall that he and his descendants shall hold the kingship.

2. As O'Rahilly has pointed out (*Hist & Myth.*, p. 163 n. 3), Eithne was one of the most frequently recurring goddess-names in Irish tradition.

tendency reduced her to the status of a vulgar virago — and such a qualification is expressly attached to Mór Muman by MM (cf. p. 79 sup.). Medb is noted for the number of her husbands and suitors[1], while Mor is spouse to the two kings Fíngen and Cathal as well as being sought after by the princes of Ireland *(Robalar imorro rigrad hErend oca cungid-se)*.

O'Rahilly has striven to show that Medb, Ériu and the rest of their type really represented the solar goddess, although his view is by no means universally accepted[2]. In the case of Mór Muman this view would seem to be supported by contemporary local tradition, which identifies Mór with the sun. In Munster Irish of the present day she is expressly identified with the sun in the phrase, « Ta Mór ina suí », and this identification is implicit in the situation of Tigh Mhóire, near Dún Cuinn at the western extremity of the Dingle peninsula[3]. O'Rahilly further argues that the Sun-goddess of Celtic belief « was also the goddess of earth and of its springs and rivers ; or, to put the matter in different words, the Earth-goddess shared the attributes of the Sun-god, whose consort she was[4]. In the case of Medb this identification with the earth-goddess is, for example, clearly reflected in the following

1. In respect of Medb Chruachna these are listed in the text which, in its two variants, goes under the titles *Cath Bóinde* (ed. *Ériu*, II, 174) and *Ferchuitred Medba* (Anecd. from Ir. Mss. v, 18) ; cf. Ó Máille, *ZCP*, XVII 130 ff. Medb Lethderg also had a succession of husbands and of her it was said that she would not allow any king in Tara who did not have her as his wife (*ZCP*, XVII, 137-9 ; MS. Materials, p. 480). Cf. Gen. Tracts 1, 147-8, where it is said that she cohabited with nine kings of Ireland.

2. Cf. Marie-Louise Sjocstedt, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes*, p. 72 : « Ainsi le monde mythique des Celtes est-il dominé par les déesses du sol, alors qu'on y cherche en vain des divinités solaires. » See, however, Vendryes, *Les Religions de l'Europe Ancienne* III, 273-4.

3. I have made a full collection of material relating to Mór which is to be published later.

4. *Ériu*, XIV, 27.

passage from *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Siblais Medb a fhual uathi, co nderna tri tulchlassa mora de, co taille muilionn in cach thurchlaiss, conid Fual Medba atberar friss*[1] (M. shed her urine, so that three great trenches were made as a result of it, in each of which a mill might have fitted. Because of this the place is called F. M.), and we find something very similar to this in the traditions of Mór as described in Curtin's *Hero-Tales* (p. xli).

From all this it seems to me a reasonable conclusion that in the Mór Muman of Irish literary and oral tradition we find preserved yet another representation of the territorial goddess, one which stood in the same relationship to the kingship of Munster as did Medb to the kingship of Tara. I do not propose to attempt to assess the real value and significance of the legend of Mór Muman in the minds of its propagators during the period in which it was current, for that is a question dependent on too many intangibles, but there is another question arising from the foregoing discussion concerning which I do wish to make some comments and suggestions : namely, are we to regard Mór Muman as a historical personage of the early seventh century upon whom various attributes and associations of a pagan goddess were foisted by later tradition, or ought we to see her as an unhistorical figure conceived in the traditional pattern of the goddess and set in a particular place and in a particular period of Irish history ? Perhaps the difference is not of great importance, except as a possible illustration of how particular tales like MM came by their characters, but, whatever the accepted answer, it appears to me that the investigation of the question is in itself illuminating.

1. Ed. Windisch, ll. 6082-4.

The goddess Mugain and the origin of Mór Muman

Mór Muman has generally been accepted as a historical character, the daughter of Aed Bennán of the Eoganacht Irluachra. Her death is recorded at 632 in AU (633 CS, 628 FM, 634 AC), and the entry in AU is important because these annals best preserve older records. If, however, we examine H. 1.8. (T. C. D.), the older MS of AU[1], we find that this entry is in a different hand to the context and can scarcely have been included in the original source. As the MS. was written in the late fifteenth century[2], the entry can claim no great antiquity. It is as follows :

Mor M̆ugā īgęn Aeḑa Bęñaī m. ?

while Rawl. B. 489 has :

Mors M̆uǧā flīa Aeḑa Beñaī[3]

Thus we see that the main prop for the supposed historicity of Mór Muman is a very weak one, if it exists at all. For a further indication in the same direction we must refer to the genealogies, where besides being given as the daughter of Aed Bennán, she is alternatively made the daughter of Aed's son, Mael Dúin (Rawl. B. 502, 151 a 17,... *no combad do Mael Duin bad ingen, ut alii dicunt*[4]). This means that her position in history as

1. Cf. *AU*, IV, p. VII, where MacCarthy concludes that Rawl. B. 489 was written from H. I. 8. ; also O'Rahilly, *Hist. & Myth.*, p. 239, n. 1 ; Ó Máille Lang. of *AU*, p. 3.

2. On the hands of the MS., cf. *AU*, IV, p. II ; Lang. of *AU*, p. 5, n. 1 ; *Hist. & Myth.*, p. 239, n. 2.

3. In this MS. the entry, as with other such additions to H. 1. 8., is written continuously in the same hand as the text ; cf. Ó Máille, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

4. Cf. LL 321 b 13, Lec. 217 a 15.

Aed Bennán's daughter was not always free from doubt[1]. Taken in conjunction with the lateness of the annalistic entry, it absolves us from any binding obligation to regard Mór Muman solely as a historical personage.

Her very name, Mór Muman, gives rise to doubts and difficulties. We have seen that there is a discrepancy between the two versions of the entry in AU. Rawl. B. 489 has *Mors* instead of *Mor* in H. 1.8. This may be a simple error in the later Rawlinson MS., but the possibility must be borne in mind that this entry is one of those which, following Ó Máille's suggestion, were copied from H. 1.8. by the scribe of Rawl. B. 489, « with, however, the help of some of the original sources for checking the correctness of the work[2]. » Moreover, if error it was, it was in no sense a blind error, for the scribe, in writing *Mors*, omitted the corresponding verb in H.1.8. It is clear, therefore, that he accepted Mughā as the name of Aed Bennán's daughter, and, it must be noted, even H. 1.8. has this form after *Mor*.

This would be merely an interesting subject for speculation, if there was no stronger evidence to hand. Admittedly we can find no reference to a daughter of Aed Bennán called Mugain, which seems to be the only name here possible, but that is only as we should expect, where so many of the links in the chain of causality may have been irretrievably lost, for it is in the normal order of things that, when one form of name, legend, etc., replaces another and draws to itself popularity and far-reaching social, literary and even political associations, the earlier form tends to be gradually erased from literary

1. But I must mention the possibility that this doubt about her parentage is related to the fact that in *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* Cathal mac Finguine, who has through error become Mór's husband in MM, is married to the daughter of Mael Dúin, king of Ailech.

2. Lang. of *AU*, p. 3.

records within the limits in which its significance has been usurped by the later form. That is why it is so striking to find in this particular case a number of sources which confirm the suggestion that I have inferred from the entry in AU. More important is the fact that they in no way depend on that entry.

In one of the poems in *Leabhar na gCeart* the following quatrain occurs after an account of the dues payable to the king of Cashel :

Sochar maiseach morChaisil
meamraid leat cach mis ;
ni mac ar beind Mumhaine
nech co caingne cis[1].

Here the form *Mumhaine*, which is confirmed by the metre, is a common variant for *Mughaine*, the spellings with medial *m* and *g* being used more or less indiscriminately in most of our manuscripts The metaphor of this line is quite clear, signifying that no person is heir to the kingship of Munster until he collects his dues from its lesser kings. For us the important point is that the poet personifies Munster under the name Mumhain (Mughain). It must of course be admitted that the version which I have quoted from BB does not agree here, and it is difficult to say which is the earlier[2] ; nevertheless, without pressing the matter too far, the deliberately contrived metaphor in Lec. has some significance and looks as if it might be an echo of an earlier association.

Next we may consult O'Davoren's Glossary, no. 93,

1. Ed. O'Donovan, p. 68 ; Lec. 196 a 47. Transl. O'Don., « The goodly income of great C. remember thou every month ; no one is a son on the lap of Mumha until he exacts tribute ». *BB* has (271 a 10) : *Sochar maiseach mor Caisil mebhraigh lat gach mis ; ni mac-fhlaith ar meann-Mumhain neach nach coingni cis.*

2. Although to me the version in BB looks like an attempt to replace the metaphor by something more prosaic and more obvious.

where the word *arsiasaigther* is glossed *.i. innsaighi, ut est arsiasaither a bráthair Mugain.i. indsaigi ar amus a brathar intí* (leg. *indí*) *agata in menma mogha nó in menma mor. Moga mor marsin*[1].

The first part of this gloss is evidently a citation from literature, but I cannot recall any probable associations. The second part, as Stokes points out, offers *menma mogha* as an etymologizing gloss on the name *Mugain*, and consequently explains *moga* as meaning the same as *mór*[2]. The fact that this artifical etymology has the effect of reducing the two names I have been examining — Mugain and Mór — to the same basic meaning may well be pure coincidence, but on the other hand it may reflect an awareness that they were closely related. At all events it does connect together *Mugain* and the adjective *mór*, and since there are other reasons for considering that *Mugain* and *Mór (Muman)* may have been related, it must be kept in mind as an independent reference of possible interest.

We now come to more definite evidence, which concerns two different characters who bore the name Mugain in Irish literature. First there is the better known Mugain, who was daughter of Conchra(d)[3] mac Duach of the Uí Duach in the territory of Osraige. Windisch has edited from LU and LL a M. I. poem attributed to Flann

1. *Arch. f. celt. Lex.*, II, 211. Stokes translates : « i. e. proceeds, ut est ' Mugain proceeds to her brother ', i. e. she who has the great mind or the high spirit proceeds towards her brother : *Moga* (means) ' great ' according to that ». Cf. *loc. cit.*, no. 1260, p. 419 *(Mogh .i. mór...)*.

2. Cf. Contribb. s. vv. *moga, mogda* (big, great) and *mogaid* (to increase)

3. L. Ó Buachalla quotes from LL 40 the form Cúchraide mac Duach among the names of seven kings of Corca Laigde who ruled over Ossory, although I cannot find it in the facsimile. The form with Cú is presumably the original one, but since it almost always occurs in the gen. in writing, it is not surprising that the nom. was liable to be corrupted. So we find nom. Conchr(a)id. V. SS. H. I, 224 ; B. N. nE. I, 107 ; Comp. Con Culainn, ed. Van Hamel, § 92.

Mainistrech, and a prose narrative affixed to it, both of them giving an account of the wondrous birth of Aed Sláne, son of Diarmait mac Cerbaill (Fergusa Cerrbeoil) by Mugain[1]. This is described as a miracle wrought by St. Finnia (Finnén), but of course it belongs to an old pagan theme and has many approximate parallels in Irish literature. It is moreover a representation of the marriage of king and goddess, in which the whole emphasis is placed on the birth of another king who will head a royal line or dynasty (cf. p. 88 sup.). In this case Aed is the ancestor of Síl Aeda, and it may be noted incidentally that the neighbouring Clann Cholmáin, whence also came many kings[2], were descended from Colmán Mór, who was, according to the prose text, son of Diarmait by Eithne, daughter of Brénand Dall of the Conmaicne Cúle Talad (S. of Mayo, *Onom.*). Eithne, it must be assumed, was here simply another instance of this popular designation for the goddess, but it was apparently not universally current in this context, for Gilla Mo-dutu in his *Banshenchas* calls Colmán's mother Erc (another well known goddess-name) and, moreover, only gives this as an alternative to his statement that Aed and Colmán were both sons of Mugain[3].

In the last quatrain of the M. I. poem we are told that Mugain belonged to Connachta *(Issí seo... célfaid araile senchad... ba de Chonnachtaib Mugain).* As Windisch remarks, this appears to be an addition to the poem, but it is not immediately clear why the person responsible chose so deliberately to contradict the statement contained

1. Ber. der königl. sächs. Gesell. der Wiss. zu Leipzig, 1884, p. 191. The part of the prose text dealing directly with Aed Sláne's birth is found also in *Cóir Anmann*, ed. Stokes, § 133. Cf. V. SS. Hib. I, 39.

2. Cf. Mac Neill, *Phases*, pp. 235-6 ; O'Rahilly, *Hist. & Myth.*, p. 166.

3. *RC*, XLVII, 305 ; LL 139 b 30. According to Gilla Mo-dutu, this Eithne was wife of Aed Sláne, *loc. cit.*, p. 306 ; LL 140 a 2.

in the opening lines — and in the other versions of the tale — namely that Mugain belonged to Munster *(Mugain ingen Chonchraid chain/maic Duach din Des-Mumain)*[1]. I would suggest by way of explanation that one cannot expect stability in the human relationships allotted to euhemerized goddesses. In the last paragraph I have mentioned one example showing with what facility resulting changes came about, and there is no doubt that such changes were a common feature of Irish literature. With regard to the particular instance in question, it may be that Mugain was elsewhere credited with a Connacht paternity, for the human parentage of the goddess-character could be altered freely to accord with the demands of time and place. However that may be, it is certain that the tale of the birth of Aed Sláne, with its off-shoots, shows her firmly rooted in a southern background. For example, the genealogies tell us that it was from her *Carn Mugaine* in Argatros took its name *(... m. Concrath cuius filia Mugain ben Diarmata meic Cerbaill diata Carn Mugaine in Argatrus*[2]*)*, which association is one of the appropriate attributes of her divinity.

We now come to the second Mugain. Amongst the notes to *Félire Oengusso* at November 12 the following quatrain occurs, in connection with Cumíne Fota (AU 592-662), the famous abbot of Cluain Ferta,

Mugain ingen Fiachach find
mathair Cumine cheolbind;
sisi Mugain a mathair,
sesium disi derbrathair[3]

1. Cf. the prose text ; *Mugain ingen Chonchraid mc. Duach Duind do feraib Muman.*

2. Rawl. B. 502, 151 a 29-30 ; also LL 321 c, Lec. 217 c 6.

3. Fél. Oeng. A, p. clxix ; Reeves, Liber Hymnorum I, 85. Transl. « Mugain, daughter of fair Fiach(n)a, was mother of Cumíne of the sweet song : this Mugain was his mother ; he to her was brother ».

and after this comes the statement that Mugain had twelve sons, six of them bishops and six kings *(Da mac déc ro-gensit o Mumain .i. ui escuip ocus ui rig: Cumin 7 Comgall)*. We are also told the story of Cumíne's incestuous birth[1] : He was the son of Fiachna of the Eoganacht Locha Léin[2], the king of Iarmuma, who had him by his own daughter as a result of a bout of drunkenness. When he discovered by whom her child had been conceived, he said that it must die. But when Cumíne was born, he was brought to the church of Îte and left there on top of a cross in a little basket *(hi cummain bic)*, whence he got his name. So the story continues, and another quatrain is attributed to Cumíne's mother, containing a play on their double relationship similar to that in the lines quoted above[3].

In the text on the mothers of Irish saints there is a passage which states that Cumíne's mother had also the following sons : Comgán Mac Dá Cherda ; Guaire son of Colmán ; Crimthann Cael son of Aed Cerr, king of Leinster ; Cuanu son of Cailchíne ; and Brecán of Dairinis[4]. It will be noticed from the quoted text that the name of Cumíne's mother is here Rīm, as it is in the Martyrology

1. Fél. Oeng. B, p. 242 : the Irish preface to the Latin hymn of Cumíne Fota, Liber Hymnorum, ed. Reeves, I, 72, 81 ; ed. Bernard and Atkinson, I, 16. It is also told in the unpublished Life in Brussels Bibl. Roy. 2324-40, ff. 47 a-53 b. Cf. Plummer, *Misc. Hag. Hib.*, Cat. no. 31.

2. In LL 286 b 42 it is stated less accurately that he belonged to the Eoganacht Chaisil.

3. In the preface to the Latin hymn of Cumíne there are further verses discoursing on the peculiar relationship between the saint and his father Fiachna.

4. Lec. 34 Va 36 : *Rim i. Fiachna maic Fiachrach Gairine maic Duach Iarlaithi mathair Cumaine maic Fhiachna 7 Comgain Maic Da Cherda 7 Guairi maic Colmain 7 Crimthaind Chaeil maic Aeda Cirr, rig Laigen 7 Chuana maic Ailchine, Laech Liathmune 7 Bracain Dairindse;* also BB 213 a 40. Cf. Ir. Texts III, 94 where the text has Rini for Rim, which looks like a misreading of the MS., and Crimthand Cualann for C. Cael.

of Donegal, while in the preface to the Latin hymn yet another name, Lann (Flann), is used of her. This variety serves to emphasize how open to change were the details of these legends, but in this case Mugain seems to be the earliest and the most generally accepted of the three names, this being also the opinion of Colgan, who, when quoting from the text attributed to Oengus, called her Rima, but then added *rectius Mugania*[1]. With regard to the statement about Mugain's numerous offspring who became kings and bishops, Todd comments how strange it is that she should have had so many husbands and but one son by each[2]. This would not have seemed so strange to him, if he had been aware that it had its roots in the widespread influence exercized on Irish literature by the theme which represented the goddess as giving birth to future kings. When the theme became part of Christian literature, it was felt that the position of the saints within the ecclesiastical order corresponded to that of the kings within the secular order, and so we find the goddess named as the mother of saints as well as kings.

I have now given as full an account as possible of these two figures known by the name Mugain, and it may be as well for me to put forward clearly the suggestion which I have earlier mentioned less directly : namely that the two Mugains are merely different localizations of the same goddess and that Mór Muman is simply a development from one of them. In addition, I think it can be shown that Mugain is an old district-name, and that the area it denoted was such that it might be understood in certain

1. Acta SS., p. 148, n. 4. The name Mugain occurs, apart from the passage quoted above from Fél. Oeng., in the unpublished *Imthechta na dá nÓinbhide* in B. IV i (R. I. A.), where she is mentioned as the mother of Comdán, and in the modern account of Cumíne's birth referred to by Todd, *Liber Hymnorum*, I, 81 n. a.

2. *Lib. Hymnorum* I, 91-2.

contexts to correspond approximately to Mumu, the name of the southern province.

In the first instance Mugain is represented as the daughter of Conchra(d) mac Duach of the Uí Duach, who were known as the Uí Duach Airgetrois, and who occupied roughly the northern half of Co. Kilkenny. They were of the Corca Laígde, a branch of the Érainn, but were given an Eoganacht ancestry by the genealogists. Together with a number of other septs of the Corca Laígde they were represented as descended from Dáire Cerbba, son of Ailill Flann Bec and third in descent from Eogan Mór[1]. In this way they entered the stem of the Eoganacht a couple of generations before its different branches took origin, and, since the titles Eoganacht Muman and Eoganacht Caisil were often regarded as interchangeable we find Conchra(d) mac Duach referred to several times as belonging to the Eoganacht Caisil[2]. On the other hand the Uí Duach Airgetrois were also attached to the stem of the Eoganacht Locha Léin at Duach (Dau) Iarlaithi (Cliach), who was third in descent from Corc mac Luigdech[3]. Reckoning in accordance with this arrangement we find that Mugain was closely related genealogically to Mór Muman, in fact — for what it is worth — that her uncle was Mór's great-grandfather (i. e. Cobthach m. Duach Iarlaithi). But, we have already seen that the second Mugain belonged to the Eoganacht Locha Léin and that her father was grandson of Duach (Dau) Iarlaithe (Rawl. B. 502, 151 a 11 : ... *m. Fiachnae m. Fiachrach Gairrine m. Duach Iarlaithi m. Maine...*), and accordingly her

1. Rawl. B. 502, 149 a ; LL 321 d ; BB 173 c ; Gen. Tracts I, ed. Ó Raithbheartaigh, p. 147. Cf. Ó Buachalla, *Cork Hist. Soc. Journal*, vol. 57 (1952), 69-70.

2. e. g. Bethada N.nÉ. I, 89 ; S. Gad. I, 74.

3. Rawl. B. 502, 151 a 29-31 ; LL 321 c.

great-uncle (Cobthach) would have been Mór's great-grandfather. The precise relationship between these characters is of itself unimportant, but it serves to show how they are grouped around a certain point in a certain genealogical line[1], and this was certainly no fortuitous circumstance[2].

We are not, however, dependent on such evidence from which to infer the identity of Mugain and Mór Muman, for there is at least one text which seems to leave little doubt about the matter. In *Betha Finnchua* we are told how the saint came from Ulster and visited Cathal mac Aeda Flaind Cathrach at Cashel, seeking from him land for his settlement. When he proposes to take a site at Fán Muilt among the kings enclosures and cow-yards, the queen, who is called Mughain, daughter of Fiachra Finn[3], plays true to her basic character by objecting to this proposal, which is only agreed to when Finnchua undertakes to pay a rent[4]. Later in the edited text, when the same king and queen of Munster are mentioned, the latter is called Mum*u*, daughter of Fiachra, but this is almost certainly the result of a wrong expansion by the editor, who should have read Mum*ain*. The importance of this passage is that it describes Mugain, the daughter

1. It may also be mentioned that both Mór's father, Aed Bennán, and Mugain's father, Fiachna, had sons named Cumine (cf. Rawl. B. 502, 151 a 1).

2. As I have pointed out earlier, Lann was one of the two other names by which the second Mugain was known, and it is interesting to observe that Gilla Modutu names Land, Diarmait mac Cerbaill's daughter, as the wife of Dau Irlóchra, i. e. D. Iarlaithe (LL 139 b ; *RC* 47, 306) ; cf. H. 2. 7., which calls her Fall (*Fall ingen Diarmata 7 ingen Mughna, ben Duach Iarlaithe*, *ZCP*, XXI, 311). This Lann cannot of course, be reconciled with the later affiliation of the Uí Duach to the Eoganacht of Loch Léin.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 92. With regard to her father's name, Fiachra for Fiachna is quite common, as is the reverse ; cf. p. 21 sup., *Mugain ingen Fiachach find.*

4. Lis. Lives, ed. Stokes, pp. 87-8.

of Fiachna and mother of Cumíne, as the wife of Cathal mac Aeda Flaind Cathrach, for, since Mór Muman also was wife to Cathal (cf. pp. 82-83 sup.), we are left with the inferable equation, Mugain = Mór Muman.

Now, if Mugain and Mór Muman are really identical and play the same basic role in the guise of queens of Munster, the question arises as to how these figures came to represent the southern province in the ancient pattern comprising king and territorial goddess. In the case of Mór Muman her name makes the connection to some extent self-evident, but the same cannot be said of Mugain. The suggestion presents itself that Mugain was an old district-name, like so many other goddess-names (Ériu, Áine, etc.) and that it was closely associated with the province of Munster in such a way that the two names might be regarded in certain contexts as interchangeable. I have, in fact, noticed one reference which bears witness to the identification of Mumu and Mugain as place-names. In LU 99 a there is a short text which Lucius Gwynn and Thurneysen describe as a somewhat expanded adaptation of the well known outline of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* originally contained in *Cín Dromma Snechta*[1]. In the former text there is a list of Conaire's *gesa*, which is not found in the passage from C. D. S., but which is included in T. B. D. D. One of these *gesa* runs as follows in LU, *Ni airsed augra in da tuathmail tuathMaugnae*, while in T. B. D. D. (§ 16) it appears as, *Ni ahurrais augra do da moghud(mogaid)*[2]. Subsequently in T. B. D. D. (§§ 24-5) the violation of this *ges* by Conaire is recounted : There

1. *ZCP*, X ; Held., p. 657. The text from C. D. S. has been edited by Nettlau, *RC*, XIV, 151 ; Thurneysen, Zu ir. Hss. I, 27 : cf. Held., p. 622-3.

2. Ed. Knott, p. 6 ; Stokes, *RC*, XXII, 27, 392. This may be translated, « You are not to restrain (settle) a quarrel of (your) two serfs ». In the LU version the verb is in the third sing. of the imperf. subj. The word *tuathmail* seems to be fairly close to *mug* in meaning (cf. Contribb. s. v. *tuath-*).

was complete peace in his reign, except that there was armed dissension between the two Corpres in *Tuadmumain (Tuathmumain)*, etc. The obvious inference is that LU 99 a preserves an older form of the *ges*[1], and that its *tuathMaugnae* (g.) was considered the equivalent of *Tuadmumain* (d.) by the later writer. The former name would come from a nom. Maugin, which would in turn be orthographically an earlier form of our Mugain (cf. pp. 110-112 inf.).

At this point the natural question is : what exactly does the above identification of Mumu and Mugain imply with regard to Irish history and political geography ? In the first place it does not imply that the two terms were really identical in their application, but that the later writer substituted the familiar name of the southern province for the old and rather unfamiliar name he found in his exemplar. At the same time there is no reason to assume that this substitution was purely an arbitrary one, and it is more natural and more in keeping with the usual associations of the Coirpres to assume that the writer of the passage in T. B. D. D. felt he was replacing the unfamiliar name by a better known one of approximately the same import. How then is this proximity in meaning to be explained ? Taking the three literary representations of the goddess which I have been discussing, there can be little doubt that Mór is the latest of them and Mugain daughter of Conchra(d) the earliest. First she was held to belong to the Uí Duach, who were Érainn ; next this sept was attached in a familiar fashion to the genealogy of the Eoganacht Locha Léin, and Mugain was transferred to the true line of the genealogy as the daughter of Fiachna ; and, finally, the change became complete

1. Cf. the replacement of the rather rare *tuathmail* by the common word *mog*.

with the coming into existence of Mór Muman. Thus, judging from the earliest stage at which we see her, it appears that she was originally a goddess of the Érainn. The form of her earlier name, *Mugain*, inevitably suggests a connection with Mug (Nuadat) of Leth Moga, the legendary leader of the invasion of the Southern Gaels. According to O'Rahilly, Mug Nuadat is to be identified with Eogan, his grandson in the genealogies and the ancestor of the Eoganachta, and, furthermore, his name was originally *Nuadu*, but as this was too obviously a deity-name, *Mug* was prefixed to it when its bearer was euhemerized[1]. Yet, if I am right in suggesting that Mugain was the fem. of *Mug*, this might confer on the above use of the name rather more meaning and antiquity than implied by O'Rahilly. However that may be, it is noteworthy that the Érainn, although found throughout Ireland, were especially associated with Munster in Irish tradition[2], and so it is not surprising to find the name Mugain being applied in particular to southern Ireland.

There remains one collection of evidence by which to test this suggestion that the name Mugain had an Ivernic background and a particular application as a place-name to the South of Ireland. We have on record a number of place — and population — names which appear to me to contain the goddess-name *Mugain*, and these I propose to examine briefly for the light, if any, this distribution may throw on their ethnic associations :

1. *Hist. & Myth.*, pp. 184-5, 490. He does say that Eogan and Nuadu appear to have been taken over by the Southern Gaels from the Ivernic population.

2. Ptolemy placed the *Iverni* (= later *Érainn*) in the south of Ireland : cf. Mac Neill, *Phases*, p. 65 ; O'Rahilly, *Hist. & Myth.*, p. 9. Cf. for example the reference to the Cairbres in *Ériu* VI, 137, *Ale rogabsat dibad a nErna Muman* (It is they who took possession in Érainn of Munster).

(i) *Carn Mugaine:* I have already (p. 96 sup.) quoted from the genealogies the passage which derives the name of Carn Mugaine in Argatros from Mugain, daughter of Conchra(d) mac Duach. This place is also mentioned in Ó hUidhrín's topographical poem, where it seems to be located near Tuaim Uí Mheadhra, the seat of the Uí Meargdha, lords of Eoganacht Ruis Argaid, that is in the barony of Upper Ormond in Tipperary[1]. This introduces another problem : The earliest presentation of Mugain makes her belong to the Uí Duach Airgetrois, and it may be wondered whether the similar element in both names indicates any connection between the Uí Duach Airgetrois and the area occupied by the Eoganacht Ruis Argaid. The territory of Uí Duach as reflected in Irish literature covered most of the northern portion of the present Co. Kilkenny (cf. Hogan, *Onom.*)[2], but it is not necessarily to be concluded that the people of that name were always confined to the same district. It is clear that there was an Airgetros (Ros Airgit) in N. Kilkenny and another in N. Tipperary[3], but whether they were ever linked by Mag Airgetrois, with which they appear to be interchangeable, is difficult to prove or disprove.

(ii) *Fiadh Mughaine, Tir Mughain:* In the laws we find mention of *Fiadh Mudhain (Fiad Mumhuin)*[4], which

1. Ed. Carney, ll. 1497-1500 :

Le hUibh Meargdha an chrioch mar chuid,
Eoganacht reidh Ruis Arguid,
triath gach siodha badhbh braine
fa Charn mhiolla Mughaine.

For other references see Hogan, *Onom.*, where the forms *C. Mugana, C. Mugna, C. Mumhaine* and *C. Mumhain* are quoted.

2. O'Donovan (*FM* ,I, 51) identifies Airgetros with Silverwood in parish of Rathbeagh, barony of Galmoy, Co. Kilkenny.

3. Cf. Mac Firbis genealogies where he speaks of the Eoganacht of Ros Arguid Iarthair, or Airther Cliach, O'Curry's transcript, p. 603.

4. A. L. I. IV, 6-7 ; V, 266-7. Cf. Fiadh Moghain in *Caithréim Thoir.*, ed. O'Grady, I, 26 (*Mogháin* in printed text).

Atkinson identified with Fithmoone, near Thurles, and which appears to be the same as *Tir Mughain* (or *Mudain*) in Éili[1]. O'Donovan in his supplement to O'Reilly's dictionary refers to « *Fiodh Móghna* recte *Fiadh Mughaine* », which he identifies with Kilfithmone, a parish in the barony of Eliogarty, Co. Tipperary. The earlier anglicized form of this name was Fethmohan[2]. It will be noticed that the district to which these names refer lies more or less between the territory of the Eoganacht Ruis Argait and the territory usually assigned to the Uí Duach Airgetrois.

(iii) *Mugna, Belach Mugna, Mag Mugna, Eo Mugna:* In *Fél. Oeng.* at Dec. 11 Moshenóc is associated with *Mugnae (Damasus lam Shenóc Mugnai luaith, mag lethan)*[3]. The notes added to the text tell us that he was from Mugna (or, in Belach Mughna) in the west of Leinster by the bank of the Berba. It is further explained that Mugna was a great sacred tree, whose top was as broad as the whole plain, and which remained hidden until the night on which Conn Cétchathach was born, etc[4]. These names from Fél. Oeng. occur frequently in Irish literature, as will be amply demonstrated by a glance at Hogan's *Onomasticon* s. vv. *Mugna, Belach Mugna, Eo Mugna, Mag Mugna* and *Mogno Moshenoc*[5]. Their precise location and limits, which have been a matter of some uncertainty,

1. A. L. I. IV, 6 ; V, 264.

2. Cal. of Docs. rel. to Ireland, 1302-7, ed. Sweetman and Handcock, p. 284. Hogan also quotes Fid Mogain from H. 1. 7., 63 b.

3. Fél. Oeng. B. LB has,... *Mugnai luathmuig lethan*, and it may be noted that Stokes gave similar readings for Rawl. B. 505 and Laud 610 in Fel. Oeng. A, but not in the diplomatic second edition.

4. Cf. *Airne Fingein*, ed. Vendryes, § iii, for a similar account of this tree. There again it is called *Mugna*, and is said to stand on Mag Mugna. Other references will be found in *RC*, XV, 419, 444 ; XVI, 277-8 : Met. D. III, 144, -6, -8 ; IV, 242.

5. Cf. also Hogan, *Onom.*, s. v. Mugna Salchain.

it is not necessary to discuss in this context. Suffice it to say that in the light of available records they were situated, or centred, in an area covering the southern portion of Kildare[1]. What I do wish to suggest is that the *Mugna(e)* of these names is the syncopated gen[2]. of *Mugain*, and that it had become fossilized by the time most of our references were set down[3]. It is true that *Mugna* by itself is employed of the tree otherwise known as *Eo Mugna*, and that *Mag Mugna* is referred to as *Mugna(e)*, but these do not really present a great difficulty. It is not uncommon for *Mag* to be omitted from place-names, leaving only the qualifying word (e. g. *Femen* = *Mag Femin*, *Line* = *M. Line*), and so we have presumably *Mugna(e)* in place of an earlier *Mag Mugnae*. On the other hand there are several possible explanations of its use as the name of the sacred tree in the closely related passages which I have mentioned. In the gen. *eo mugna* would give *í mugna*, where *i* without the mark of length could easily be taken for *.i.* (cf. in note to Fél. Oeng. : ... *.i. Mughna darbile mór*), or it might be that an expression like *Cráeb Mugna*[4] to refer to the tree led to the assumption that *Mugna* was its complete name.

I do not seek to draw any far-reaching conclusions from the position of the places to which the above names were attached, but it may be remarked that, if I am correct in deriving them from *Mugain*, they then carry further to the east the line of associations which we have seen to stretch from the north of Tipperary.

1. The latest investigation of this problem is that made by Price, *Journal R. S. A. I.*, LXXIX (1949), 33 ff.

2. We have already seen forms with and without syncopation side by side in *Carn Mugaine (C. Mugna)* and *Fiad Mugaine (F. Moghna)*.

3. Mugna occurs as a man's name in one of the *Stories from the law-tracts* ed. Dillon, *Ériu*, XI, 44. but this appears to be the only instance of it. Cf. *Contribb.* s. v. *Mugna*.

4. *RC*, XV, 445 ; Anecd. I, 35.

(iv) *Cluain Mugna:* Hogan cites a place of this name and identifies it tentatively with Clonmona, a townland in the barony of Lower Ormond[1].

(v) *Cluain (Druim) Ferta Mughaine:* O'Donovan identifies this with Kilclonfert in the barony of Lower Philipstown in the county of Uí Fáilghe ; cf. *Onom.* svv. *Cluain F. M., Druim F. M., C. Fertae Mongain* and *D. Ferta Mughaine.* St. Colmán is associated with it[2].

(vi) *Cell Mugaine:* Such a name should presuppose a Christian foundation of some sort, but that is not necessarily the case ; to take but one example, and that the nearest, we have just seen how *Cluain Ferta Mughaine* became Kilclonfert, i. e. *Cell Cluana Ferta*[3]. There was a *C. Mugaine* which was supposed to be named from Mugain,

1. Cf. LL 369 b 2, where Colum of C. M. is mentioned in the list of saints of the same name.

2. Fél. Oeng. and Mart. Don. at Sept. 3.

3. With regard to this question of Christian associations, it may be mentioned that *Fél. Oeng.* contains three instances of Mogain, apart from the mother of Cumine Fota. One of these is Mogin (also Mugain, Mumain, Mugna) daughter of Ailill mac Dúnlainge, king of Leinster, who, together with her sister Fedelm, is said to have had a foundation at Cell Ingen Ailella in the west of Mag Liphi (Dec. 9). I doubt the authenticity of this statement, at least in the form given, and I quote two passages from the saints' genealogies transcribed by Frazer and Grosjean from Laud 610, as showing how confused were this Mugain's connections : *Mugaine ingen Dunlaing m. Enna Niad, is uaithe ata Ceall Mudhaine an Ib No hi Tuadmumain* (Ir. Texts III, 92 § 146) and *Ingena Ailella righ Laigen ocus is iad dochreid do Phatraic oc Dún Náis ocus da mac in rig. .i. Dunlaing Ailella 7 Illand. Mugain 7 Feidlimthi in da ingein. Is uathad Cell Mugaine in Uib No i Tuamumain* (*loc. cit.*, p. 99, § 263). The only Mugain having associations with the area on the western border of Leinster and with Munster as well was the goddess. Moreover, in the Lismore life of Findén we are given to understand that Mugna Salchain, which, Hogan tentatively suggests, may be the same as the Mugna in Kildare discussed above (pp. 28-9), was situated in the territory of Uí Dunlainge, whose ancestor was Dúnlaing mac Enna Niad (Lis. Lives, ed. Stokes, ll. 2604-5).

Mugna Salchain is mentioned in LL 381 as the seat of Aengus Musc who was mythical ancestor of the Múscraige, a branch of the Érainn.

daughter of Flannán m.Branduib and which O'Donovan identifies with Kilmoone in the barony of Kinellmeaky, Cork[1]. Hogan also mentions the parishes of Kilmoney, in the barony of Kerrycurrihy, Cork, and Kilmoon in Burren, Clare, while he suggests *Cell Mughna* as the original form of Kilmoon, earlier Kilmone, in the diocese of Meath[2]. Perhaps this last name should be taken in conjunction with a reference in FM 992 to the death of a certain Maelpóil, bishop of *Mughain* or *Mughna (Maelpóil epscop Mughna d'écc)*, for versions of this entry speak of him as the *comharba* of Féchín, that is abbot of *Fobar* (angl. Fore), C. Westmeath[3]. At 940 FM records also the death of Maelmochta, scribe and abbot of Cluain Iráird, and appends the following quatrain :

Maolmochta don Midhe maigh,
mór liach an craobh caoin cumhra ;
atbath cenn na h-anmcairde,
Caoncomrac moltach Mughna[4]

These wisps of evidence seem to indicate that some part of the old extensive province of Mide was once known by the name *Mugain* or *Mugna* (incidentally, the fact that the instances leave us in doubt as to the correct nominative, shows how it is that elsewhere we so often find *Mugna* for the proper nom. *Mugain*). Its area cannot be determined from these references[5].

1. In the genealogies of the Corca Laigde, Misc. of Celt. Soc., pp. 18-9.

2. In the deanery of Duleek, cf. Cal. of Docs. rel. to Ireland, 1302-7, ed. Sweetman and Handcock, p. 253.

3. AU 1001, CS 999. In the latter text, as in AC, Maelpóil is also called bishop of Clonmacnois.

4. Cf. AU 942, where Maelmochta is called *airchinnech* of Cluain Iraird.

5. According to O'Rahilly, it may be recalled, the Tara district (in Brega) was in the possession of the Érainn in pre-Gaelic times, while in the early historical period the *Cálraige*, a branch of the Érainn, were settled in Westmeath, Longford, Roscommon, Mayo and Sligo.

(vii) *Mag Mogna:* Hogan says this was in the North of Ireland, but the few references available permit us to be a little more precise. According to the earlier and incomplete version of *Brislech Mór Maige Muirtheimne* at least part of the well known road from Emain Macha to Tara called Slige Midluachra ran across Mag Mogna. We are told that Cú Chulainn stopped on his southward journey from Emain at the house of his foster-mother (i. e. Finnchaem), who, it is stated elsewhere, lived with her husband Amorgin at Dún Imbrith in Mag Muirtheimne[1]. He then proceeded along Slige Midluachra on Mag Mogna (LL 120 a 10, *Téit as iar Sligi Midluachra iar Maig Mogna*) and later passed around Sliab Fuait. This implies that some part of Mag Mogna lay to the north of Sliab Fuait[2]. It is stated in a note in the upper margin of LL 161 b that there were two hills named Meitte and Cette in Mag Mogna *(di Meittiu for Cettiu .i. da chnocc i Maig Mogna)*, but the other references to them do not offer much help in accertaining their position (references given in Contribb. s. v. Méithe). They would seem to be about north Louth. Another text mentions Mag Fothaid, Mag Uisnig and Mag Mogna as if they were adjacent areas[3]. It seems likely that the latter name and Mad Muirtheimne did not refer to mutually exclusive areas.

Whether this Mag Mogna was connected geographically with the *Mogno* (ds.) which Hogan cites from the Codex Salmanticensis of the Lives of the Irish Saints as being near Bangor or St. Comgell's Cell, is a matter for

1. e. g. *IT*, I, 14.

2. Assuming that the writer had in mind the usual abode of Cú Chulainn's foster-mother, it also implies that Mag Muirtheimne extended to the north of Sliab Fuait, whereas it is ordinarily understood to lie south of that area.

3. Ir. Nennius, ed. Todd, p. 266.

conjecture but it is scarcely likely. Bangor was, of course, in the territory of the Dál Fiatach, who were Érainn[1].

With regard to the form of the medial vowel in *Mogna*, it may be noted that there is considerable variation where *a*, *au* stands before a *u*-quality consonant[2]. The nom. *Mogin* (daughter of Ailill m. Dúnlainge) occurs in the Book of Armagh[3] and *Mog(a)in* in Fél. Oeng. (and notes) at August 21, November 15, and December 9 and 15.

(viii) *Dál Maugnae, Dál Maigne, Mauginrige, Mughanraige:* Some septs had a feminine eponym, showing that they regarded this or that goddess as their eponymous ancestress. It is therefore particularly interesting to find on record sept-names which contain the name of the goddess *Mugain.* First of all we have *Mauginrige* and *Mughanraige*[4], which are found only in H. 2.7. (T. C. D.) and in Mac Firbis's Genealogies. This need not occasion any misgivings, however, for, as Mac Neill has pointed out, it was quite common for sept-names to interchange their collective formulae[5], and in fact we find the form *Dál Maugnae* in the texts just mentioned. In other sources we find a number of forms which seem to be related to this[6] : *Dál Maigni*[7], *D. Magned*[8], *D. Maigne*[9],

1. In *Suidigud Tellaig Temra* (*Ériu*, IV, 148) a list of place-names from the east of Ireland include *Mugno*, v. l. *Mudhna* (d.). Its situation is not clear from the accompanying names, although those of them which are identifiable are all in the north-east.

2. Cf. Thurneysen's Grammar, pp. 50-2.

3. Ed. Gwynn, p. 37 a.

4. According to Mac Neill there was a growing tendancy for *-rige* (<*rige* <*rīgion)* to become *-raige* (Early Irish Pop. Groups, R. I. A. Proc. XXIX C, 67.

5. *Loc. cit.*, pp. 64, 70-1.

6. Cf. Ó Briain, *ZCP*, XV, 235-6.

7. Gen. Tracts I, 107.

8. In the Rawl. B. 502 list of the Dési, 133 a 39 (Y Cymmrodor, XIV, 128).

9. Gen. Tracts, pp. 119, 154, 159 ; Rawl. B. 502 133 b 22 ; BB 140 a (according to Hogan).

D. Maigin[1] and *D. Maignen(d)*[2]. To these must be added the *Corcu Maighne*, who are included among the *Daer-thuatha* of Cashel in MS. C. I,2 (R. I. A.), 40a. Taking all the examples into consideration the basic form would appear to be *Dál (Corcu) Maigne*. The situation of the people who went by the name is unknown, but they were non-Gaelic, as is shown by their inclusion in the lists of *Aithech-thuatha*, or tributary septs, and apparently they belonged to the Érainn *(Ar slicht Luigne Lethdaib do hErnaib ata Dal Luigne Lethduib do Ernaib a nDail Maigne*[3]*)*.

There is no difficulty about deriving the forms *Dál Maugnae*, *Mauginrige* and *Mughanraige* from the name *Mugain (Maugin)*, but the connection between it and *Dál Maigne* is not so clear. The various stages by which the O. I. word *mug* came about, may be represented in reverse order as *mug: maug* (in the forms *Maugdornu*, *Maugdornorum*, Thes. Pal. II, 269, 276)[4] : *magu* (Ogam) : *magus* (cf. G. *Magu-rix*)[5]. In the case of *Maugin* (cf. the form *Maugina* in Adamnán), I suggest we have an ī-stem originally derived from *magu* +the feminizing suffix *-nī*, in the same way as *rígain* is the feminine of *rí*[6]. When in the genitive, the final vowel would have caused syncope, thereby bringing together a u-quality consonant and a palatal consonant. According to Thurneysen the ensuing group should be palatal[7], and therefore we might

1. Uí M. 35 Rb 55.
2. In the Laud 610 list of the Dési, *Ériu*, III, 139 ; Gen. Tracts, p. 159.
3. Gen. Tracts, p. 159. Cf. a couple of lines earlier : *Ar slicht Maignend Gall ata Dal Maignend do Ernaib.*
4. Cf. *Maugina (filia Daimeni)* in Adamnán, ed. Reeves, pp. 111, -2 ; Thes. Pal. II, 277.
5. Cf. Pokorny, *Zeit. f. Vergl. Sprachforschung*, XLV, 73.
6. Cf. Pedersen, *Vergl. Gramm.*, II, 57.
7. O. I. Grammar, p. 98.

expect that an earlier genitive, corresponding to later *Maugnae*, *Mugnae*, was *Maigne:* That is to say, that the people, or peoples, known as *Dál Maigne*, etc., regarded themselves as descended from the goddess later known as *Mugain.*

The evidence contained in the above set of references amounts briefly to this : There was a considerable number of place-names — even excluding the doubtful cases — which contained the name Mugain, and there was a people belonging to the Érainn who regarded the goddess of that name as their eponymous ancestor. The greater part of these place-names were located in the southern half of Ireland, but they continued as far north as east Ulster. Most, if not all, appear to have been in areas occupied by the Erainn in pre-Gaelic times and associated with them even in the historic period.

* * *

Finally, the general argument of the foregoing pages may be summed up as follows : Mór Muman as shown in M. M. plays the part of the territorial goddess in the well known theme of the marriage of king and goddess. This particular example is important because it deals with a provincial kingship and especially because it attaches the older mythological pattern to a comparatively late period of Irish history. At first glance the lateness of the period might invite scepticism, but it must be remembered that the seventh century was the age which for the most part determined the nature of future Irish literary tradition and decided what aspects of the earlier pagan tradition were to be preserved and developed as part of it. There was also a goddess named Mugain who was venerated

among the Érainn[1] and who was especially associated with a people similarly named and of uncertain extent in the southern half of Ireland. Her name was also preserved, however, in a large number of place-names throughout the length of the country, notably in *Eo Mugna*, the title by which one of the several great sacred trees of Ireland was known. All the evidence points to the conclusion that Mugain was originally a goddess of importance who had suffered a partial eclipse or distortion by the earliest period of our written literature.

With regard to Mór Muman it is in the first instance doubtful whether we must look upon her as the historical daughter of Aed Bennán around whose name the legend has gathered, or rather as the configuration of a pagan goddess superimposed upon the current of Munster history in the first half of the seventh century. I have put forward one or two reasons for hesitating to accept the first view, although that does not of necessity confirm the second. The whole question is tied up with the origin of the name Mór Muman : Is Mór an old name, distinct from the adjective *már*, *mór*, or is it a late artificial or accidental formation ? Unfortunately, that is a question which must remain open[2]. More important is the relation-

1. Cf. Mugain of the Ulster Cycle, who was wife of Conchobar, king of the Ulaid, these being a branch of the Érainn ; also Mugain who is one of three women mentioned in connection with (as wives of ?) Dáire, the ancestor of the Érainn, in Met. D. III, 228 (... *im Eithni, im Mair, im Mugain*, where, incidentally, the vocalism of *Mair* is confirmed by its rhyming with *taib*).

2. Apart from the reference in the genealogies, the earliest mention of Mór which I can recall is contained in the name of the poet Dallán mac Móre (perhaps a type of pseudonym), who was *ollam* to Cerball m. Muirecáin, king of Leinster from 885 to 909. If the possibility that the name Mór Muman was a comparatively late formation be accepted, then a plausible suggestion is that it arose from references on the pattern of this sentence from Leabhar na gCeart, *A eolaig Muman móire*, where the last word might be taken to be the gen. of a fem. name Mór. It so happens that *Mumu* and

ship which, if my suggestion is correct, existed between Mór Muman and Mugain. That is to say that the two figures are basically identical, or alternatively — and this really amounts to much the same thing — that Mór Muman has taken over the role which earlier belonged to Mugain[1]. The latter had been a goddess of the Érainn, but was transferred into the pedigree of the Eoganacht. Her position among the Érainn — and consequently in relation to the kingship of Tara (Ireland ?) — corresponded largely to that of Mór Muman among the Eoganachta and in relation to the kingship of Munster. Naturally, their identity is difficult, or impossible to prove outright, for not only is the material scanty, but it is inevitable that the causes which brought Mór Muman into prominence should have tended to obscure the relationship. Nevertheless, the varied circumstantial evidence, together with the direct confirmation of one text (cf. p. 79 sup.) cannot be lightly brushed aside.

mór (already the favoured form of the adj. in Würzburg) are extremely frequently combined, presumably because they alliterate. If it should be considered unlikely or impossible for an important name to come into existence in this fortuitous manner, the answer is that there are other examples : cf. Meyer, *Miscellanea Hib.*, pp. 9-11 ; O'Rahilly, *Hist. & Myth.*, pp. 48, 468.

1. As we have seen (p. 97) Mugain (Rim, Lann), the mother of Cumíne Fota, is also given as the mother of Comgán Mac Dá Cherda and Cuanu mac Cailchíni. These characters, especially the former, are found associated with Mór Muman. Incidentally, the variation in the name of Cumíne's mother as found in different sources may give us some idea as to the manner in which Mugain was supplanted by Mór Muman.

(A suivre).